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After Two-Year Decline, Ohio's Suicide Deaths Increased in 2021

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Department of Health today released the [Suicide Demographics and Trends 2021 report](#) indicating that after a two-year decline, the number of Ohio suicide deaths increased. Deaths increased in 2021 by 8% over the previous year to 1,766; however, the number of deaths remained below the 10-year high of 1,836 deaths in 2018.

The data means that five Ohioans die by suicide every day, and one youth dies every 34 hours.

“Suicide is a human tragedy, and any increase is of course deeply concerning,” said ODH Director Bruce Vanderhoff, MD, MBA. “This puts more emphasis on the importance of Governor DeWine’s efforts to prioritize the expansion of Ohio’s mental-health services. All of us, though, need to pay attention and recognize when someone is struggling and know where they can turn to for help.”

Other key findings of the 2021 report include:

- In 2021, suicide was the second-leading cause of death among Ohioans 10-34 years of age and the 12th-leading cause of death in Ohio, overall.
- From 2020 to 2021, white non-Hispanic males and females had the largest increases in the rate of suicide (7%).
- In 2021, adults 25-44 years of age had the highest rate of suicide, which increased 13% from 2020, compared with 5% increases among other reported age groups.
- Among males in 2021, those 75-years and older had the highest rate of suicide.
- Among females in 2021, those 45-54-years-old had the highest number and rate of suicide.

In 2020, RecoveryOhio (the Governor’s initiative to coordinate mental health and substance abuse programs) and the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) partnered with The Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation to create [The Suicide Prevention Plan for Ohio](#), a blueprint to mobilize and align efforts to prevent suicide.

Since then, state officials have taken aggressive action to address mental illness and to reduce suicide deaths.

Key Strategies Underway

- **Helping Ohioans recognize the warning signs and risk factors of suicide and respond appropriately.** This is being accomplished through awareness campaigns, such as [Be Present Ohio](#) and [Life is Better with You Here](#); continued support for [Crisis Intervention Team](#) (CIT) training for first responders; [Mental Health First Aid Training](#) (more than 95,000 Ohioans now trained); and [Question. Persuade. Refer \(QPR\) suicide prevention trainings](#).
- **Launching the new 3-digit 988 National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.** Since July, Ohio’s [988](#) call centers have responded to more than 10,000 call/chats/texts a month from citizens in all 88 counties. This number is

expected to grow as it becomes more widely known and used. Governor DeWine's budget proposal for SFY 2024-25 includes \$46.5 million for the continued operation of 988.

- **Reducing stigma, a common barrier to reaching out for help.** In recognition of May as Mental Health Awareness Month, Ohio's [Beat the Stigma campaign](#), a partnership with the Ohio Opioid Education Alliance, will soon be launching a new round of Public Service Announcements focused specifically on common misperceptions associated with mental health.
- **Concentrating efforts on integrating suicide prevention practices and care into high-impact systems, including healthcare, public safety, education, and employers.** OhioMHAS and the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation support awareness trainings in the workplace and recently partnered with the Ohio Chamber of Commerce to release a [Suicide Prevention Employer Toolkit](#) to educate and equip employers with tools to address mental health and suicide concerns in the workplace.
- **Building resiliency and promoting lifelong well-being of students.** In his first budget, Governor DeWine created the Student Wellness and Success Fund for schools to join community partners to help meet the physical, mental, and behavioral health needs of their students. Through the \$1.2 billion program, nearly 1,300 mental health programs have been funded in almost two-thirds of the state's school districts.
- **OhioMHAS and the Ohio Department of Education have also partnered with Ohio schools to provide [Sources of Strength](#) and Signs of Suicide programming.** Research suggests these students will be less likely than their peers at other schools to struggle with mental health problems, bullying, violence, drug misuse, or to die by suicide – all as a result of efforts in 2021 to expand this evidence-based program to their school. Ohio also launched the [Ohio School Wellness Initiative](#) with 70 pilot schools across the state implementing a Student Assistance Program focused on prevention, early intervention, and treatment supports, and targeted state resources to provide mini grants to college campuses for suicide prevention initiatives.
- **Building suicide prevention capacity and infrastructure at the organizational, local, and state levels.** Ohio has taken action to increase the number of suicide prevention coalitions that are aligned with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's best practices and established the [Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health Prevention and Promotion](#) at Ohio University and a [School-Based Center of Excellence](#) at Miami University to focus on prevention and early intervention among Ohio's K-12 students. These Centers provide best practice, evidence-based training to the behavioral health workforce and serve as resources for communities and suicide prevention coalitions across Ohio.
- **Focusing prevention efforts on groups that are considered at high-risk for suicide,** including [youth](#) (ages 10-24), [Adult males](#), [Ohioans who are racial and ethnic minorities](#), [Veterans/Military members](#), and Ohioans in living in predominantly [rural/agricultural](#). To help reduce and prevent suicides among these high-risk populations, OhioMHAS supports [Be Present Ohio](#) (youth and young adults), [Life is Better With You Here](#) (communities of color), [Life Side Ohio](#) (direct, suicide prevention outreach dedicated to the firearms community), [Got Your Back](#) (Ohio's agricultural communities), and the [Governor's Challenge](#) to Prevent Suicide Among Military Members, Veterans, and their Families.

The Governor's 2024-2025 budget proposal prioritizes mental health and significantly invests funds to prevent and treat mental illness, including:

- \$8 million each over the next two fiscal years to continue and expand proven suicide prevention programs and strategies outlined in the *2020 Suicide Prevention Plan*.
- \$100 million for the creation of an innovative State of Ohio Action for Resiliency Network – or SOAR Network – to develop, evaluate, and implement increasingly effective mental health and addiction prevention, treatment, and recovery strategies.
- \$50 million for pediatric behavioral health workforce, integration of behavioral and primary health, and development of Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTF) -- a specialty, secure residential option

that is part of the State's [OhioRISE](#) (Resilience through Integrated Systems and Excellence) initiative led by Ohio Medicaid.

"Most of this funding is sent directly to local communities and will be used to increase the number of Ohioans trained to help people build skills to bounce back from difficult life events and to reduce stigma so people can ask for help without shame," said OhioMHAS Director Lori Criss. "It will also support pediatric primary care screenings, grief support groups for loss survivors, and local coalitions who convene partners around unique community needs."

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About the Ohio Department of Health

The Ohio Department of Health's mission is advancing the health and well-being of all Ohioans by transforming the state's public health system through unique partnerships and funding streams; addressing the community conditions and inequities that lead to disparities in health outcomes; and implementing data-driven, evidence-based solutions.

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About the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) is a cabinet-level state agency that exists to provide statewide leadership of a high-quality mental health and addiction prevention, treatment and recovery system that is effective and valued by all Ohioans. OhioMHAS strives to end suffering from mental illness, substance use disorders, and problem gambling for Ohioans of all ages, their families, and communities.